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haviour is seen by all. But even human coitus is not altogether hidden from view, largely because of the sleeping arrangements. The Badaga house has at most three rooms, but when it is occupied by a joint family children usually find themselves sleeping with married relatives in one or the other of these rooms. It is thus a commonplace to see dimly one's parents or married siblings engaging in sexual activity. Couples of any age are normally very embarrassed if they think they are being watched, and normally stop what they are doing if they suspect anyone else is aware of it. If sharing the bed with children a couple will have intercourse while lying on their sides so as to be less visible and turbulent. Yet in practice anyone who wants to watch his relatives in coitus has simply to pretend to be asleep.

Sexual relations are not confined to the home. Indeed, lovers and adulterers have to manage as comfortably as they can in the bush; and here too they may be followed and spied upon by children. Parties of boys sometimes prowl around a village late at night, especially while a festival is distracting most of the adults, to find out who is staying at home for sexual purposes. Girls are normally uninterested in watching people have coitus although they have probably all witnessed the act at one time or another, I was told.

3.4. Sexual experimentation in Badaga society runs the gamut from heterosexual relations with a lover or spouse to homosexuality, masturbation and bestiality. We will consider the non-reproductive forms of behaviour first.

Masturbation is common in both sexes. Small girls may sometimes be seen doing it in public. It is said that adolescent girls masturbate by inserting an egg-plant fruit in the vagina, but while hospitals get cases proving that this does occur it cannot be a common practice, for any girl wanting some sexual experience can easily find a willing young man, especially in those villages which still lack street lighting. Adolescent boys and some adult men masturbate, and small boys may occasionally be seen doing it too.

Homosexual relations occur between young men and boys. Even older men sleeping with boys sometimes satisfy themselves between the boys' thighs. The men presume that lesbian relations also occur, but their only evidence for this is that a few adolescent girls show an abnormally rapid growth of the breasts, thought to be the result of a lesbian's manipulations. (The word *peggusi* can mean either a male or a female homosexual.)

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truate, I was told, until 18 or 19, long after they have married.) Husbands thus attach little importance to presence or absence of a hymen. A bride is nonetheless supposed to be a virgin on her first marriage, and so on the morning after her defloration her parents-in-law look for a bloodstain on the bed. If she is not in fact a virgin one of the couple will usually draw a little blood from some part of the body so as to make a stain. Whether or not the groom is responsible for her previous loss of virginity he will want a bloodstain to be found, for otherwise his parents may think he has fallen in love with a loose, unworthy girl. Badagas proverbially take a dim view of young women: "A young ox and a young girl are both inconstant: do not trust them" (Metz 1864: 94).

They have a kind of second wedding ceremony, held at about the seventh month of a girl's first pregnancy. The sexual aspect of this second ceremony is that on the following night the couple are supposed to sleep together and have intercourse. While the pregnant girl is not impure at the time of the actual ceremony, both she and her husband are considered so on the following morning. It is a ritual requirement that she carry all of their bedding to some stream, but not the usual water source, and wash it clean.

3.10. Badaga men, and less commonly women, can get a disease called *kanne no:* ("first sickness"), which is caused either by a young man's first sexual experience or by too much sexual activity in his early married years. It is a relatively rare illness, recognizable from the face and the accompanying fever. A patient is served only "cooling" foods till he recovers; he rests at home, and is also given *kodangu soppu* (made from velvety patchouli, etc.) as for any fever. The parents stop the couple from sleeping together for the time being; until fully recovered the patient will be permitted little or no coitus by his elders. This illness is said to be quite dangerous, whereas "too little" intercourse is not thought to have any bad effect on the body.

Menstrual Practices

3.11. Badaga therapists do not know why menstruation occurs, and simply attribute it to God's will. The intervals can vary, I was told, from 16 to 40 days, tending to be shorter in fat women. Among young women menses occurs every 18, 19 or 20 days, with 22 days as perhaps the maximum. With older women the period comes on

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about to receive food, she brought a pot outside, left it on the ground, and stepped back about five meters while the visitor poured her foodstuffs into the pot. This was in fact the usual way of giving food to untouchables in South India. As women did not expect very good food in the menstrual hut they tended to fill themselves up before leaving home: "The eye of the ox which has been ploughing is on the village; the eye of a woman just before menses is on the hearth." A more rambunctious proverb states: "The woman who has not eaten is like the one in the menstrual hut; the woman who does not fart is like summer"—summer being a rather uncomfortable period.

Adult Sexual Activity

3.15. Badaga society seems to be more tolerant of sexual escapades, whether within or beyond the bonds of marriage, than is usually recorded as the case in other Hindu communities. Thus a frustrated missionary reported: "Badaga women, who have not come much into contact with Christianity, freely express their disgust at the miserable condition of Christian women, who are bound to one husband only!" (Anonymous 1894: 547). A proverb still heard on the lips of Badaga men expresses their exasperation with womenfolk: "A passionate wife is as bad as a house that leaks" (Metz 1864: 94). Yet there is little of the double standard of morality that separates the sexes in orthodox Hindu and Muslim India. Badagas of both sexes enjoy coitus, a factor that is essential to procreation, for they believe that unless a couple are properly satisfied by the act the woman will not conceive. Ignorance of the physiological facts of paternity is evidenced from the belief expressed by older informants that, if either husband or wife is contemplating divorce and remarriage, then pregnancy cannot occur even though they still have intercourse. Nevertheless they do believe that a foetus grows out of the semen in the womb, and it is fed by blood coming from the mother's belly (10.13). In those situations where a couple are satisfied but no pregnancy ensues, it is assumed that some sin has been committed by either the couple or their ancestors.

Despite this emphasis on the pleasurable aspect of sex, much coitus is reported to occur for other reasons. When a couple have been working hard all day in the woods or fields they really feel the need for total rest throughout the night. Yet they may still have inter-

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833 course simply to please their parents; or so that the husband will not be suspected of impotence by his watchful relatives; or so that his parents may not accuse the girl of being barren; or, when one of them does want intercourse, the other does it merely to oblige. Public opinion (208) is an important factor in sexual relations, and it must if possible be satisfied by a pregnancy. If a couple have no children a divorce may be forced upon them after a while, even if neither 842 of them wants that. When a couple have no children outsiders start 586 asking their parents, "What is the matter with them?" Interestingly, 208 loose talk of this sort will be directed towards the childless husband before people — primarily his parents — begin to attach any blame to the girl.

833 Older couples who have several children continue to engage in 887 coitus either for pleasure or out of habit, I was told. Men may con- 886 tinue into old age, perhaps performing the act no more than once a month; but women tend to lose interest once menopause has set in, and are often not in the best of health by that time. A small mino- 587 rity of widowers decide they have the strength to remarry and provided they are wealthy enough to support another wife may intimate this interest to a male friend of equal age. He will tell the old man's sons and daughters about the idea, and these children will then look around for a new stepmother. This however will only occur after they have tested the old man's capabilities. One test is to have some- (514) one observe him when he urinates: it must be noted whether the flow (827) of urine was strong enough to make a slight hole in the mud, which would be taken as an indication of suitable strength. A further test might involve the wife of his younger brother. She would be deputed 587 to catch him somewhere privately where she might suggest particular 835 women for him, or even go so far as to assay his capabilities herself. Such an affair would be impermissible if the old man were related as a "husband's father" to her — albeit a classificatory one. But otherwise, provided the affair were handled with discretion, it would be quite acceptable for her to have relations with a husband's brother. Furthermore "it is quite common for a widow to marry her 587 brother-in-law" ("Miles" 1933: 74). In the past a wealthy old widower might ask a younger man to find him a wife. If successful in this 833 he would probably locate a young but barren woman, who might well complain right away that such an old man could not satisfy her. This dilemma was sometimes overcome when the go-between undertook to satisfy the woman provided she married his older friend.

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In a similar arrangement an old man's younger brother slept with the new wife and begot children who were treated as her husband's. Such practices now seem to have stopped. "Children for an older man are a weight on his shoulder," says the proverb.

3.16. In keeping with the idea that intercourse should satisfy a couple, Badagas are familiar with a variety of coital approaches—although nothing like that described in the *Kama Sutra*. The psychological benefits of making love are acknowledged in a proverb: "[If husband and wife are] not on good terms before midnight, they will play after midnight."

Badagas customarily take a bath before having sexual relations, and under normal conditions are both nude when making love. Older couples are generally naked in bed, but nowadays the younger people wear pyjamas or underwear. Young men, particularly if educated in a city, know how to use foreplay to get a woman excited. Until European films were seen in the Nilgiris, however, mouth-kissing was not indulged in, although men did kiss and bite the neck, cheeks and breasts of their women. Inside the house the normal position for intercourse is lying on a bed, but if they have to hurry the couple will use a standing position or stoop over something, with the man entering from behind, as indeed they do when in the forest. Parents may have relations in the same bed their children are sleeping in, in which case they will lie on their sides during intercourse. Curiously, a couple can do this with their baby lying beside them, and it will not be affected by the "bad wind" of coitus; whereas if they do it in another room they must not come near their baby until they have cleaned themselves and put on fresh clothes, for fear that the baby will be affected. Furthermore, if they also have some older children they may take them into the same bed with the baby before having intercourse in that very bed; the belief here being that even though the other children are weaned they too could be affected by this very dangerous "wind" if they were sleeping in another room. Young couples with no children generally sleep in a small room by themselves, on the end of the veranda. If their ageing parents live with them, the couple may leave the inner room to them and sleep under the wide shelf in the outer room. Otherwise a couple will occupy the inner room at night. If a man has two wives he usually has relations with one in the presence of the other, all three sharing the same bed.

Although a young bride should be the first to get up in the morn-

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ing and start the housework, she would pollute the food were she not to wash first. She must bathe after having had intercourse, and older women in the household watch to see that she does so. It would be a major sin for a woman to attend to her children in the morning without bathing first, and if her child dies in infancy her husband's mother may blame her for having killed it by this terrible omission.

Young couples generally have coitus with the man lying on top of the girl, his legs outside hers. If this does not satisfy her she wraps her legs around his buttocks. Otherwise she will certainly be more satisfied if she sits astride her husband while he sits on the edge of the bed. If necessary she will fondle him to arouse his enthusiasm. It is said that one needs a large penis to satisfy a woman properly. Without both testicles the penis will not stiffen effectively: this is indeed their only function. These intimate details can become a subject of ribaldry when a girl is noticed to be visiting her parents too often: people may chide the husband for having a small organ, or suggest he try the second and third positions just described, or else nickname him *O:gotte* ("one-ball").

The amount of sexual activity depends on the husband's stamina and interest, and becomes progressively less as he gets older. Until their first child is born a couple may do it several times nightly, two or three times a week. After a birth has occurred they probably do it less often, and should not recommence coitus until the fifth month after the birth. Young married men boast to their friends about the number of times they have done it in one night; but such statements are necessarily prone to exaggeration. The terminology used in such bawdy discussions may range from *ke:vatu* (a noun — "fuck") to the somewhat more seemly *ma:duvatu* (similarly translatable, but literally meaning "doing"). *Katira* ("it makes, does") is generally used of animals, but may occur in reference to a lusty man in the phrase *e:ru katira*, "to fuck like a buffalo." (This is considered something of a compliment.) The usual pattern of intercourse seems to recognize a "safe period." Couples have coitus once or twice in the period between the sixth and the fourteenth or fifteenth days after menstruation, which they rightly consider to be the period when conception may occur. Those however who want no more children have intercourse only from the twenty-fifth or twenty-sixth day after the previous menstruation.

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843 pregnancy. Furthermore, a man whose wife is pregnant should not kill a snake, lest the spirit of the snake enter the foetus and the [825] child be born dumb, looking like a snake, and with its tongue forever flashing in and out.

There are also various restrictions on the woman's behaviour. She should not eat red onion or garden marrows, otherwise the baby will have itches when born. She should keep herself busy around the house, so that the child will also be lively when born. Immediately after a pregnancy is suspected the girl will be prohibited from washing her clothes or putting on clean ones, lest this make her feel so good that she menstruates. She cannot go to any festival or ceremony at which she might see something new or interesting. She must not cross any large river, and must not cross the boundary of her hamlet either. All of these restrictions apply only till the ninetieth day of pregnancy.

During the dangerous period between the fortieth and sixtieth days the woman must have complete rest, and she generally goes to her father's house for this. During that time the pregnancy can [261] be lost if she eats "heating" foods, those causing an excess of heat in the body. Thus women are not given chilies then, although they want them, because these are heating. Furthermore, a woman should not carry a heavy load, or run, or take long strides, and should be careful while walking down steep places.

[833] A woman should not have intercourse from the time her pregnancy is first recognized until the third month. After that time she can have it, but only at long intervals. Prior to the sixtieth day the woman may abort, in which case the abortion is treated as a menses for social purposes (see above, 3.13.).

4.3. In her third month a woman can become active and eat without the nauseous sensation. Then, when lying in bed early in the morning, she can feel the surface of her stomach and known there is something else there; and generally from the third month she will see some milk if the breasts are pressed. From the start of the fifth month the foetus moves in the womb occasionally. Between the seventh and ninth months the woman can sometimes feel it "gasping for breath."

No special foods or medicines are given the woman from her third month onward, but if she is getting too much "heat" in the body then a particular mixture is fed to her. This is because with excess of "heat" she may have a stillbirth in the seventh or eighth

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843 585 851 and his wife are supposed to be under pollution, and sit in the verandah to receive presents. The mats used by them for sleeping on are cleaned on the following morning, and they get rid of the pollution by bathing. (Thurston 1909: 108-09)

(833) It is reported that the couple sleep side by side on this night, with a stick between them to symbolize the coming child, and they are supposed to have intercourse. This however is considered a more dangerous act in the fifth than in the seventh month.

In the unfortunate event that this ceremony is not performed before labour begins, the nude woman is covered with a cloth while her husband ties the turmeric-coloured thread around her neck. (The cloth simply saves the woman from some embarrasment.) If the thread is not tied before her delivery, it signifies that the woman has no husband.

843 757 4.5. From the seventh month onwards the foetus may get a limb tangled or be in the wrong position, and then the mother feels some lassitude and cannot work. One of the few old ladies who have the skill will then massage the woman's stomach till the foetus is back in the regular position. The massage isdone with the help of oil poured on the stomach. This oil used to come from the nuts of the castor-oil plant; but nowadays ground-nut oil is used, or else coconut oil sometimes. This massage can only be done in the seventh or ninth month, for the stomach should not be touched in the eighth month at all. Neverthless an old, highly experienced woman may do the massage in that month, but still with trepidation.

843 There is in fact a saying which translates : "In the fifth month the child will say, 'Shall I come out or shall I stay inside?' " Another states: "In the eighth month he will make a place for himself," it being implied that the foetus will be aborted then if it is not comfortable. The foetus can possibly get out of position when the woman walks or gets into bed. Hence another Badaga saying: "During pregnancy be careful about the legs; during the milk-giving time [i.e. until the child is weaned] be careful about the mouth." "Legs" refer to the woman's movements. She must be careful about the "mouth," i.e. her diet, because that food will be transmitted to the baby through her breast milk.

The woman may do whatever she wants, and is given whatever she asks for, in the ninth month. She is usually at her father's

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village by this time, and there her relatives give her sweets, show her beautiful views, and if possible beautiful dresses. She has to be careful lest too many sweets lead to worms in her stomach or in her newborn child. It is not unusual for sexual relations to occur in the latter part of a pregnancy. Because of the dangers just stated, it does not occur in the fifth or eighth month, lest the woman miscarry. In the eighth or ninth month, however, the girl generally has a strong sexual desire, and in the last month the couple may discretely have intercourse. This is done with care: they lie on their sides or adopt some other position so that no weight is placed on the womb. This intercourse is said to satisfy the woman and ensure that she has no problem with the delivery. One old therapist used to advise when a delivery was late that the couple should have intercourse, and then delivery would follow within a day or two.

When the confinement is imminent, the woman moves back to her father's house, especially if it is her first pregnancy, because she will get better treatment there. While she is there everyone in the hamlet should feed her one meal. For subsequent births she may be allowed to remain at her husband's house, and may use the outer room for her confinement (Thurston 1909 : 109). For the first confinement, however, she is taken to her father's house even if she does not want to go.

Birth

4.6. Women generally deliver after the ninth month is completed, but some do so 10-15 days before this, others 10-15 days after. There may even be successful births at the end of the tenth month, generally in a subsequent delivery, not a woman's first. Such a birth, however, is probably accounted for by the pregnancy in fact having started only at the month following that which is being counted from. It is recognized that conception could have occurred on any day up to the one when the last menses was expected but failed to appear. Otherwise when a birth is a long time overdue it usually means there will be twins. One of these is always weak, and it needs the extra time to develop properly.

Some 40-50 per cent of women give birth a day or two before the new moon or the full moon; so they must be careful as the new moon and the full moon approach. Sometimes they give birth

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854 [603] repeatedly saw K. Sithamma at the age of 75 suckling a small grandchild to quieten it.)

5.13. The arrival of a new baby necessarily brings changes in the 854 sleeping habits of a couple. When it is dusk the door of the house 513 must be closed tight, for fear that a "bad wind" or evil spirit might 342 enter and make the baby sick. This is compulsory until the fifth or [753] sixth month of life: the door may not be opened again, even momentarily, until just before sunrise. If the father has not yet come home at dusk, then either the baby will go to a neighbouring house for the night or the father will have to sleep in one of them when he returns. In later infancy the door should be closed for the night at about 10 o'clock, and this practice will continue until the child is weaned.

854 When sleeping with her baby a woman's body is entirely nude, 513 for if she wore clothes they would prevent heat from reaching the 855 child from her body. Until a baby is six or seven months old the [853] mother is advised to sleep with her back to it, and never to sleep while suckling: these precautions result from the fear the child may be suffocated by a breast. Thus if the mother wants to roll over on the bed she must first move the baby over. Usually the youngest one or two children sleep between their parents for warmth, with the unweaned infant always next to the mother. Alternatively mother and baby may use one bed, the father and older children occupying another bed. Sleeping with one's children is not altogether a comfortable situation: "The man who is sleeping with children and the man who is eating raw animal flesh are alike"—both experience difficulties. Other older children in the family may sleep together, but after reaching seven or eight girls sleep separately from their brothers, or else with their mother.

833 5.14. If a mother has intercourse right after giving birth this weakens 834 the womb for the next delivery, Badagas believe, and so they generally do not do it until five or six months afterwards. One man told me he had enjoyed his wife about three weeks after two of his children were born, and the children died after 52 and 54 days, presumably because of the weakening of their mother's milk. Because of such dangers men used to ask a new father in earlier days, "Are you wearing your loincloth at night?" The cloth was considered sufficient restraint on his passion.